

Status of Tribal Women in India

Prashant Kumar Baghel¹ And Dr. Anindhya Tiwari²

¹Ph.D Research Scholar, MATS Law School, Raipur, Chhattishgarh, India

²Head Of The Department, MATS Law School, Raipur, Chhattishgarh, India

Abstract:-

The tribal women constitute, like any other social group, about half of the total population. The tribal women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men and share problems related to reproductive health. With the onset of development programmes, economic changes are taking place but tribal women remain traditional in their dress, language, tools and resources. Violence against the vulnerable section of the society arising due to multitude factors in the era of globalization is a serious matter of social and academic discourse. Women at large are proving to be the most vulnerable section of the society, who bear the brunt of the ongoing process of social and economic transformation in the 21st century. Globalization has presented ne challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality and justice, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. Benefits of the growing global economy are unevenly distributed leading to wide economic disparities.

Introduction:-

The constitution of India guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedom such as protection of life and personal liberty. Indian women are the beneficiaries of these rights in the same manner as the Indian men.

Article 14 ensures equality before law.

Arctic 15 prohibits any discrimination.

After these rights, position of women has legally strengthened but in practice even today, they are victims of exploitations and atrocities. Concern for a focus on women in tribal studies has been very recent. It emerged out of general interest and concern with women's issues the world over. The value system governing larger Indian society has been in the process of change. With this there has been a shift in the image of tribal women who are thus invariably portrayed as enjoying a better social status than their counterparts in the larger Indian society. Tribal society in the post-Independence era has been witness to unprecedented change, which has been most marked in respect of culture, modes of making a living and social

differentiation. Their bearing on women's status in society and gender relations has been far-reaching.

Tribal constitute 8.6% of the total population of the country, numbering 104.28 million (2011 census) and cover about 15% of the country's area. The fact that tribal people need special attention can be observed from their low social, economic and participatory indicators. Whether it is material and child mortality, size of agricultural holdings or access to drinking water and electricity, tribal communities lag behind the general population.

India as a whole is characterised by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region. On virtually all frontiers of human societal economic education scientific legal political and religious spheres Indian women suffer profoundly. For all time there are socio-cultural factors which validate for the status of women in particular society. It is always culture (a set of collective experiences of ideas, norms, values, and beliefs associated with a people) with its gender role inequalities and socialisation (the intricate process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the position of women in a society.¹

The status of tribal women can be judge mainly by the roles they play in societies. Their roles are determined to a large extend through the system of descent. The families try to pass their property by the line of descent. The family surnames too are traced on the basis of the system of descent. In an unilineal system the descent is traced either through the male or female line. When the descent is traced through the mothers line, it is called a matrilineal system and when it is traced through father's line, it is called a patrilineal system. Most of the tribes in India follow a patrilineal system. There are exceptional cases like the khabi, jai tia, Garo and Lalung of Meghalaya in the North East who follow the matrilineal system. The Mappilas of Kerala too are a matrilineal community. There are rare cases of bilineal descent. The status of a person quite often depends on the system of authority he/she enjoys in the community. When the authority is held in held through the male line, it is called 'patriarchy' and when it is held through the female line, it is called 'matriarchy'. Quite frequently one mixes up 'descent' with authority. Not surprisingly, the khasis are often believed to follow matriarchy. But in reality though the property is inherited through the mothers line, the final authority of the household vests with the mothers brother.²

¹Tribal women yesterday, Today and Tomorrow Dr. Anil Jain and Dr S.K. Tripathi

²Status of tribal women in india Mainstream ,vol.no.12 March 10,2012 Tuesday 13 March 2012, by If Roy Burman

During the recent upsurges in the North East or central India, many tribal women have joined the underground army. They are found leaving their homes and undergoing military training. In the North East, many of the girls were known for running errands for the underground. Several of them have laid down their lives too. But even among them, the women have never been known for wielding the leadership. The Naaa Mothers Associated has earned some good known name in recent times for becoming interlocutors between the underground and Indian security forces. Even during the head hunting days, the Naaa women acted very bravely to usher in peace between warring villages. They operated as peacemakers between the warring villagers (Zehol:1998) If we recall that the Tangkhul, like others Naaa society who were feuding communities we find that in the Tangkhul society, the women are assigned some responsibilities of critical importance. In an account on head hunting among the Nagas, a special section has been assigned to women's role. It is mentioned there that, when a party was passed very far killing a warrior or two, and the verdict was known a neutral force come in. The neutral force belonged whether to the neighbouring villages or the neutral ladies called Pukhareila. They could not be banned as a rule. She was highly respected for neutrality, and they were called as ambassadors of peace. In the bygone days. When head hunting was practiced, these Pukhareilas played vital role saving lives of men. Visto (2003) also observes that among the Chakhesang Nagas of Na galangal, the wife of the traditional village wielded a lot of power and respect. She also notes that though traditionally the women had no political power, their decisions, particularly related to women's issues, we're always respected.³

The tribal women and girls migrated to cities from different tribal areas far away from the cities in which they have settled. It is observed that in the process of migration of tribal women and girls to cities the 'Push - Pull' factors have played an important role. The significant push factors are very low rates of wages, unemployment and land alienation along with poverty, agent, church leaders and indebtedness. Marriage was found to be the single most important reason for migration of female members of tribal communities. Migration of tribal girls to big cities for education is very less and hence negligible.

Now I would like to give an overview of the economic, social, political, Education and religious status of the tribal women in India:

³Status of Tribal women, Eva Margaret Hansdak

1. Economic Status

In traditional tribal societies, the economic roles of women different in different communities in some tribes women collect fruits, edible roots, tubers, firewood and manage household affairs. In certain parts of the centre and western Himalaya besides their household duties, they help in cultivation and bring fodder for the cattle. In tribal such as the Mundas, Oraons, Santals, Hos, kharias, Gonds, etc women look after harvesting and transplanting. In matrilineal societies like Khasi and Garo tribes of Meghalaya property is transmitted from mother to daughter. Certain occupations are exclusively in the hands of women for example weaving and stitching sale of fish etc, in a matrilineal society it is women who are responsible for looking after children, brothers, sisters, husbands, parents etc. They thus have to work hard to earn money. In Patrilineal tribes, property is transmitted from father to son and women have no right to inherent or own property. The status in patriarchal tribal society is not as high as it is in the matrilineal societies. The status of the women is mainly determined on the basis of various taboos attached to women. Most of the tribal societies recognise that the impurity of women arises out of pregnancy, menstruation, child birth etc. On all such occasions women are prevented from coming into contact with sacred places and objects. For example the Do da women are found unsuitable for the religious ceremonial life related to the saved buffalo diary. But in patrilineal societies there are some societies where husband does not play always a dominant role such as Gond women enjoys equal status and freedom with male in some aspects of social life.⁴

2. Social Status

The practice of paying 'bride' is observed among many tribes. The groom pays a token amount to the bride's father in order to marry her. This practice shows that women are seen as assets and not liabilities in tribal societies. In most of the tribal communities the primary duty of the women is child bearing. Traditional customs are comparatively more liberal women. There is no segregation and women have freedom and independence. They may go outside the house for economic and other activities. They may visit the local weekly market and fairs sing and dance in public enjoy the native drink and move freely the earnings if they wish to do so.

3. Educational Status

On the basis of the research study On migrant tribal Women Girls in Ten Cities: A Study of Their Socio-Cultural and Economic Reference to Social Intervention "a little More than 55 percent of women and 29 percent of girls were

⁴Status of women in tribal society of India Essay Puja Mondal

illiterates, about 12 percent and 16 percent respectively were educated up to middle school level and about 7 and 16 per cent respectively up to higher secondary level. Only 6 percent of women and 11 percent of girls were graduates mainly in faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Those with P.G. qualifications were hardly 1 percent and 2 percent respectively.

4. Political and Religious status

Tribal societies are well organised and have well developed political and judicial system of their own. In traditional tribal communities, women have no political and religious role at all. They are not allowed to hold office in the village council and to participate in the council meetings. They usually convey their opinions to the village council through their husbands and other menfolk. Today the tribal community is no longer homogeneous. Many tribal have moved up in the social and economic ladder and they are difficult to distinguish from the non tribal. At the same time a large number still continue to live as hunter gathering and subsistence farmers. Many educated tribal women have taken up position as teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, officers, and so on.⁵

5. Life Style

Tribal women and girls migrated to cities belong to different tribal regions of different states in India and as such they had different pattern of life style. Migrant tribal women and girls had to gradually shift from their traditional life style to the local life style of the cities. Similar trend was reported by migrant tribal girls. As far as use of tribal language is concern a large majority of tribal women and girls use their mother-tongue (tribal language) for intra-family and intra-community communication even after migration to cities. Surprisingly, mostly of migrant tribal women and girls were able to speak in Hindi, (National Language).⁶

6. Tribal women of Today

Today their work is now gone beyond family responsibilities to make them self dependent. Educated women support in various arrangements -the husband and family members. They have become diplomats, freedom fighters and even officials in UNO. Today she is moving towards equality. By law she enjoys equality with men but is also herself party to removal of social disparities. Sense of equality is getting strong in women. They have started stepping in social political technical administrative and religious fields and also society is becoming liber towards them. They have started winning prerogatives in certain industries and professions like

⁵Elwinvernier 1976. "Tribal Women " Devaki Jain

⁶Eassy on the status of women in tribal societies in India Mainstream New Delhi December 27,2014, SukheshDe

nursing, textile and fashion designing, telephone operating and typing, etc. and thus proven false the sayings like "only men are capable."⁷

7. Women Tomorrow:-

Women of 21st century finds herself capable in every sphere. Changed social setup. Changing political picture is going to take women very high. Today they have progressed a lot. Be her Bichendri Pal, Kiran Badi, Arundhati Roy, Medha Patekar or Mayawati, they are living examples of female emancipation. Their future seems to be better than men. Today in each sphere, they are ahead by men. Day is not far when they will overshadow men in all spheres.⁸

Constitutional Mechanism for Uplift of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes:-

The deep concern of the framers of the Constitutions for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes is reflected in the elaborate constitutional mechanism set-up for their uplift. Article 17 abolishes Untouchability. Article 46 requires the State ' to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and , in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social injustice and all forms for exploitation. Article 335 provides that the claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State. Article 15(4) refers to the special provisions for their advancement. Article 16(4A) speaks of "reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of SCs/STs, which are not adequately represented in the services under the State'. Article 338 provides for a National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with duties to investigate and monitor all matters relating to safeguards provided for them, to inquire into specific complaints and to participate and advise on the planning process of their socio-economic development etc. Article 330 and Article 332 of the Constitution respectively provide for reservation of seats in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and in the legislative assemblies of the States. Under Part IX relating to the Panchayats and Part IXA of the Constitution relating to the Municipalities, reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in local bodies has been envisaged and provided.

⁷Virginus Xaxa 2013 Women and Gender in the study of Tribals in india, Saga journals Department of Sociology Delhi University

⁸Status of the tribal women/Girls, Society of tribal women for development community

Part IX and Part IXA of the Constitution respectively permit the legislature of a State to make provision for reservation of seats in Panchayat and Municipalities in favour of backward classes citizens. Article 340* of the Constitution provides for appointment of a Commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes. Article 16(4) and 16(4A) respectively permit reservation of appointments or posts and in matters of promotion in favour of backward classes not adequately represented in the services under the State. Article 15(4) permits the State to make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizen. In addition to these, there are also other Constitutional provisions for the welfare and socio-economic empowerment of the Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes.

Fulfillment of Constitutional Mandate—How far? How Fair ?

In spite of this manifest, avowed and determined concern of the Constitution, the objectives have not been fully achieved and whatever has been done has been done hesitatingly, half-heartedly and as a measure of concession forgetting that in this area we are dealing with Constitutional rights and not concession to those classes.⁹

It is instructive to examine how the socio-economic, legal and political factors inter-play to generate a particular matrix of social dynamics. The text of the Constitution created a lofty mix of Fundamental Rights and a set of Directives enjoining upon the State the obligation to promote and to secure to the citizens, the enjoyment of rights that provide the citizen an environment allowing his/her growth and development with social justice, equal opportunity, right to work and access to basic needs and opportunity without discrimination.

While the text created a noble and a sanguine texture, the key players were the State, the legal system, the dynamics of social development and the social forces generated by the socio-political processes. The linkage between these players provides some explanations to the path that the nation has traversed in economic growth, social development and pursuit of equal justice.

The processes of economic development do not necessarily lead to equitable income distribution. In fact, these often result in appropriation of national and social resource by a small percentage of the people. While over the years, the social services in the field of education, health, transportation and tertiary sectors have increased, there has been an inherent distortion in their universal access.

Typically in this paradigm, the centre has continuously appropriated access to every aspect of development of services and resource at the cost of vast periphery. Policy instruments loaded with different objectives produce a paradoxical regime

⁹Whitaker's, World of Facts New (ED. 2007), by Penguin Books India, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi, 110017 India.

of results, which is fairly seen in the areas where the Constitution assigned the role of basic font of delivery to the state.

The legal regime also confronts us with paradoxes. While the legal text is explicit in seeking remedies, the implementation appears to evade performance. In implementation of laws and the working of the legal system several trends emerge.

Laws and legal processes are not self executing; they depend on the players such as the administrative structure and its processes, the judiciary with the anticipation that the social attitudes are driven by enlightened notions-: equity, social justice, fair play. However, the responses of the players in the implementation of laws protecting the weak, the oppressed, women and children and the socially disadvantaged have over the years become increasingly indifferent.

The injustices have been allowed to persist and the system has failed to provide for self-correction. In implementation and in interpretation of the Constitution and law, distortion and denial of the right have crept in.

A related issue of social dynamics is the opportunity and the access to the disadvantaged to take advantage of forums of the enforcement process and social mobilization. The polarization of castes and classes in the recent years across the society has shown disturbing trends, in as much as the administrative system, the judiciary, the legal processes reflect the social reality of a given area or region. Enforcement agencies have themselves responded to these urges for social protests and desire for enforcement using the legal and social processes with indifferences and indeed ostensibly with resistance.

Increasingly it was shown that whereas processes were available to the disadvantaged, the weak, the oppressed, women and children, access was denied owing to its cost and remoteness. Even when the State created some shelters through various form of Legal Aid to Scheduled Castes, women and to the oppressed, they were reduced to tokenism owing to the quality and availability. Indeed, the higher levels in judiciary intervened with vigour against the injustice manifest in the system in the form of bonded labour, child labour, crime against the women and Scheduled Castes and tribals etc. It is pertinent to note that the legal and institutional processes of redressal where provided are available only formally and have made a little or no impact.

The disadvantage sections of the society have difficult access even to the shelters and sanctuaries created for them under the law. The manner and frequency with which social protests have, in some cases, been snuffed out by the very system created to protect it, is revealing. This is the major challenge for the system which incorporates in its formal text the creation and the sustenance of a civil society.¹⁰

¹⁰Various provision of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

Conclusion:-

To conclude my whole topic I reached on this decision that if the status of the women in India was not too bad in traditional era if we compare with the modern age still there are some communities who follow their own old traditions and the position of that communities is same as it was in traditional era but no doubt there are some communities whose women play very important role in the field of politics economy and social life. One can see new changes in all age income and social groups of women starting from the age of satya ans suvraan, crossing freedom struggle age of Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, educators and doctors of 5th and 6th decade, now in 22nd century they have became engineers, pilots, all India services employees, sculptor journalist, female judge etc. Her achievements are touching height of sky. Now days we can't neglect their important in the development of our Nation.